



THE COMMUNICATOR

Grant County Employee Newsletter

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Center on Aging Submitted by Gayle Antony, Director

Grant County's Center on Aging was established to serve anyone over the age of 60 and is governed by the Older American's Act. Center on Aging's eleven member board of directors is comprised of County Board Supervisors and appointed citizens of Grant County. This year six new members were selected to serve on the committee. The committee is involved in advocacy, budget concerns, agency personnel issues, local and state organizations, and in establishing policy.



Nutritional Support is provided through eleven meals sites which are located in Boscobel, Blue River, Muscoda, Fennimore, Montfort, Bagley, Cassville, Platteville, Cuba City, Potosi, and Lancaster. Each meal site takes on the personality of the community, the site manager, and the numerous dedicated volunteers. The meal sites offer not only a varied menu but also offer entertainment, education and fellowship. Hot and nutritious meal delivery is also provided to those seniors who are unable to come to the sites. The sites serve meals Monday thru Friday and are only closed when the weather is bad and on holidays.

Transportation for seniors throughout Grant County is provided with two wheel chair lift buses, one Shared Ride Taxi, and a TRIPS program (for medical and important legal appointments). The buses and the taxi are handicap accessible and equipped with wheelchair lifts. The dedicated staff and volunteers provide door to door service for all who wish to ride.

Benefits Specialist services provide information, counseling, assistance and advocacy in the areas of public benefits, health insurance, and consumer law. Service and benefit topics include: Medicare, Medical Assistance, Senior-Care, Medicare supplement insurance, uncovered health costs, Social Security, Supplemental Security Income (SSI), Food Stamps, housing benefits, spousal impoverishment, disability, fraud, and financial exploitation.

Family Caregiver Support services help to provide stress relief to those caring for a loved one at home. This program provides education, information, assistance, individual counseling, respite care, and supplemental service case management.

Information and Assistance is also provided for each program. It is estimated that 75% of all the calls received by Center on Aging are requests for information and/or assistance. Information and assistance is also provided through newsletters and community events. We publish the News and Views which is distributed every other month to over 22,000 Grant County households. Elderfest is sponsored annually by the Center on Aging and showcases 51 businesses, organizations and foundations. Over 635 guests visited Elderfest in 2003. This year we will host our 9th annual Elderfest on October 29th.

Other Special Programs are available including Rural Housing (small safety home modifications and repair), Senior Cell Phone (for 911 emergency calls), Specialized Transports, and the Senior Statesman Program.

Educational Opportunities are provided for individuals, organizations and families. Each month Grant County Extension visits two or more of our meal sites and provides information on nutrition and food safety. These opportunities include the Step by Step program about benefit and legal issues. Powerful Tools for You is also offered to help the "Care Giver" cope with the demands of caring for an adult at home. Each year the agency also helps sponsor the Dementia Workshop, Memory Walk, 55 Alive, and Legal Assistance Programs.

Center on Aging is currently looking for **Emergency Food Pack** sponsors. The Emergency Food Packs are given to those seniors who currently participate in the Home Delivered Meals program for use if they become low on groceries or meal delivery is cancelled due to inclement weather. If you can help with this program, please contact us at 723-6113. Informational posters regarding this much needed program will be provided to each County department for posting. Any help you can provide would be greatly appreciated.



Center on Aging, "**your aging information and service center**", is staffed by 65 employees and 500 volunteers who provide services to over 2500 seniors and their families. As the Center on Aging Director for the past two years, I have been and continue to be impressed by the scope, versatility and dedication of the Center on Aging staff and volunteers. They provide top quality support to Grant County and its seniors.



Open Enrollment

Dawn Mergen, Personnel Specialist

Grant County's **Open Enrollment / Informational Meeting** is scheduled for Monday, October 25th at the Administration building from 4:30 - 6:30 p.m. Representatives will be at the meeting from Dean Health Plan, Medical Associates Health Plans, Wisconsin Deferred Compensation Program, The Equitable, Nationwide Retirement Solutions, Benefits Inc., EBC Flex, and AFLAC. This meeting starts the annual open enrollment period where employees may make health and dental insurance changes, sign up for EBC Flex, AFLAC insurance, voluntary life insurance, or make deferred compensation changes. The open enrollment changes are effective January 1, 2005. Watch for more information attached to your October paychecks.

Voluntary Life Insurance will be offered to all benefit eligible employees beginning January 1, 2005. *Please watch for informational meeting times and locations.*

Don't forget to use your **EBC Flex** dollars before the end of the year. It's great that we can use the dollars towards eligible over-the-counter medications this year! *There will be **EBC informational presentations** on the 25th of October from 11 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Specific times and locations will be posted in October.*

***Oral Contraceptive Coverage** will be available for Medical Associates participants starting January 1, 2005. Make sure you let your doctor and pharmacist know about this change when you get your prescriptions filled next year.

Dental Insurance Premiums will remain unchanged for 2005.

Two **Health Insurance Plans** are offered to Grant County's benefit eligible employees. The main differences in the plans are listed in this chart.

	<u>Medical Associates Health Plans</u>		<u>Dean Health Plan</u>	
Primary Physician	Not necessary		Required	
Coverage Area	Parts of Iowa, Illinois & Wisconsin		Southern Wisconsin	
Specialists	Dubuque and Iowa City		Madison – St. Mary's	
Lifetime Maximum	\$2 Million		Unlimited	
Prescription Drug Copay	\$5 generic / \$10 brand name		\$6 generic / \$10 brand name	
Birth Control Coverage	Covered with prescription co-pay*		Covered with prescription co-pay	
Routine Eye Exam	Coverage frequency based on age		Covered annually	
Eye Wear Coverage	Partially covered		None	
Hearing Aid	No coverage		\$500 every 36 months	
Fitness Club Discounts	None		At some clubs	
Monthly Premiums (effective 1/1/05)	<u>County Pays</u>	<u>Employee Pays</u>	<u>County Pays</u>	<u>Employee Pays</u>
Single	\$501.98	\$ 0	\$ 455.72	\$ 0
Employee/Child	\$768.03	\$135.54	\$ 735.99	\$129.88
Employee/Spouse	\$896.05	\$158.12	\$ 813.48	\$143.54
Family	\$989.92	\$174.68	\$1,104.06	\$194.82

Please contact Dawn at 723-2540 with any questions on how to change insurance carriers, to obtain a complete schedule of benefits and provider list or questions regarding open enrollment.

Anyone wishing to have a specific subject discussed in a future newsletter may contact Joyce Roling at 723-2045.



Spit Tobacco—It's No Game

Submitted by Kathy Marty, Tobacco-Free Coalition Coordinator (723-6416)

What is spit tobacco? Spit tobacco, or **smokeless tobacco** as the Tobacco Industry calls it to make it appear safer, comes in three forms: **chew, plug, and snuff**. Chewing tobacco (often called a "wad") is usually sold as shredded tobacco leaves in a pouch or as plug tobacco, shredded tobacco leaves pressed into a hard block. Users place chewing or plug tobacco between the cheek and the gum for several hours to get a continuous high from the nicotine in the tobacco. Snuff (or dip) is ground-up moist tobacco (usually sold in cans) and is placed between the lower lip and the gum. Just a pinch is all that is needed to release the nicotine.

What are the ingredients in spit to-

bacco? Spit tobacco is a **mixture of tobacco, sweeteners, salts, nicotine, carcinogens, and hundreds of other chemicals poisonous to the body**. Further, it contains gritty materials that wear down the surfaces of the teeth and scratch the soft tissues in the mouth, allowing the nicotine and other chemicals to enter the blood system rapidly. **Nicotine is a poisonous and highly addictive drug (as addictive as cocaine or heroin) and is found in all tobacco products.**

Is spit tobacco safer than smoking? No, spit tobacco is just as dangerous (if not more dangerous) to your health and as addictive as cigarette smoking. In fact, one type of snuff contains the same

amount of nicotine as 60 cigarettes. People who dip or chew increase their risk of **mouth cancer, throat cancer, heart disease, dental diseases, stomach problems, loss of taste and smell, and physical changes**, such as fatigue, muscle weakness, dizziness, and decreased physical performance. In addition, people who dip or chew spread their germs when they spit. **This increases the risk of passing an infection to others.**

Spit tobacco is no game. Steve Marsee, an Oklahoma track star, started using snuff when he was 12 years old. Although he had part of his tongue and jawbone removed, he still died of mouth cancer at the age of 19. Contact Kathy Marty, Tobacco-Free Coalition Coordinator, for **some helpful materials that can help you, your friends, or your family quit using spit tobacco or cigarettes.**